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RESEARCH

'As a Native Person, Why Should I Adapt?': A Multimethod Approach to Majority Finns' Attitudes Towards Multiculturalism

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Multiculturalism is a controversial concept and a debated topic. To develop scientific analysis and inform political discussions, it is important to study how lay people evaluate it. Previous research has mostly regarded attitudes towards multiculturalism as unidimensional. This research often relies on the operationalisation offered by the Multicultural Ideology Scale (MIS), in which minorities' cultural maintenance and acceptance of cultural diversity are central. In this multimethod study, we take a critical perspective on such operationalisation and examine majority of Finns' responses to MIS in a survey and in focus group discussions. By approaching evaluation processes as social interaction, we challenge the unidimensionality assumption of attitudes towards multiculturalism. We show how cultural essentialism and nationalism are used in arguing for and against multiculturalism, and in negotiating its boundaries so that the majority can keep its dominant position. This conflicts with recognition and equality that are widely considered as cornerstones of multiculturalism.

Keywords: Multiculturalism; Attitudes; Qualitative methods; Acculturation; Inter-group relations; Lay discourse

Introduction

In the Nordic countries, the increase in the number of asylum seekers and other immigrant groups has fuelled public debates demanding better ways to deal with cultural diversity at the level of society as well as in everyday life (Kivisto & Wahlbeck 2013). In political and academic discussions, multiculturalism or multicultural ideology, which is generally defined as an ideology promoting acceptance and respect of cultural and ethnic differences between groups, has been traditionally considered as one of the most promising paradigms of managing intergroup relations (Berry 2011; Verkuyten 2007). However, multiculturalism has also been discussed as a political project that has come to its end (Joppke 2004) and lost its original meaning (Winter 2015). Academic discussions have addressed, for instance, the 'death' (Kundnani 2002), 'retreat' (Kymlicka 2010), and 'backlash' (Vertovec & Wessendorf 2010) of multiculturalism. However, Kymlicka (2010) argues that the 'master narrative of the rise and

fall of multiculturalism' is based on a misunderstanding of multiculturalism and calls for a critical discussion on multiculturalism and its supposed failure. In their related analysis, Lentin & Titley (2011) show that the political and media discussions on the crisis of multiculturalism created a discursive space to replace the struggle for equality with cultural racism, that is, to use culture instead of race in constructing difference and hierarchies. Further, Malik (2013) takes a critical stand towards the mere concept of multiculturalism by arguing that the inequality and exclusion based on culture are built in the construct of multiculturalism itself. These academic debates highlight the controversial nature of multiculturalism, a concept and ideology that also have relevance in the lived realities and everyday encounters of ordinary people (Howarth 2016).

In this social psychological study, we examine the lay discourse of multiculturalism. We study how Finnish majority members evaluate multiculturalism as operationalised in the Multicultural Ideology Scale (MIS) (Berry & Kalin 1995), which focuses on its two core principles: acceptance of cultural diversity in the society and minorities' right to maintain their cultures. By utilising quantitative and qualitative data collected from majority Finns in Finland in May 2013, and by approaching evaluation as social interaction, we show that essentialist and hierarchical elements of multiculturalism discussed above in the critiques of multiculturalism can also be identified in the lay people's argumentation. In this article, we first discuss previous research on attitudes towards multiculturalism. We then proceed by introducing the societal context of the present study as well as the materials analysed. Before presenting and discussing the results, we consider quantitative and qualitative approaches to study attitudes. We end by highlighting the need to study attitudes towards multiculturalism as complex and multifaceted phenomena intertwined with cultural essentialist and nationalist notions.

Assessing Attitudes towards Multiculturalism

When discussing the success or failure of any political ideology, it is essential to examine the ways in which it is assessed in scientific research and to reflect scientific discussions on the ways it is evaluated among lay people. Social and acculturation psychology have long traditions in examining attitudes towards multiculturalism. In this line of research, guided by the premises of cognitive social psychology, support for multiculturalism has been operationalised as attitudes towards cultural diversity and (in most cases) particularly towards minorities' cultural maintenance (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007; Berry & Kalin 1995; van de Vijver, Breugelmans & Schalk-Soekar 2008).

One of the most commonly used instruments to measure attitudes towards multiculturalism is the MIS developed by Berry & Kalin (1995, see e.g. Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2003). This scale consists of 10 statements addressing the importance of cultural maintenance and the influence of ethnocultural diversity on the society. When measured with MIS or its extensions (Breugelmans & van de Vijver 2004), attitudes towards multiculturalism appear as unidimensional ranging from low to high acceptance, and they often locate on a medium or neutral point of the measure (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2007; Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver 2008; van de Vijver, Breugelmans & Schalk-Soekar 2008). However, several studies in this research tradition suggest that majority group members tend to have less positive attitudes towards multiculturalism than ethnocultural minority groups (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2003; Plaut et al. 2011; Verkuyten 2005). One of the main explanations for this is that multiculturalism has different meanings and consequences depending on one's group status (Plaut et al. 2011; Verkuyten 2005): for minority groups, it offers a possibility for positive identity, while it seems to threaten the dominant position of the majority.

This line of research has increased our understanding of the factors predicting attitudes towards multiculturalism, particularly group differences in evaluating multiculturalism.

However, quantitative attitude research fails to capture the reasoning and negotiation related to evaluating complex social issues, like multiculturalism. As attitude objects can be seen as being constantly negotiated as well as constituted in interaction (Potter & Wetherell 1988), we argue that focusing on the evaluation processes can shed light on the dimensions of everyday multiculturalism that remain hidden from quantitative attitude studies (cf. Chirkov 2009).

Previous studies employing a qualitative approach in examining how people discuss cultural diversity and immigration have found that majority group members often emphasise the maintenance of their dominant position (Antonsich 2012; Lyons et al. 2011; Skey 2010; Wetherell & Potter 1992), while denying being racist (Augoustinos & Every 2007). In the majority discourse, majority and minority groups are often presented as essentially different (Verkuyten 2003), and the majority is presented as a group that has the right to demand immigrants' assimilation (Antonsich 2012).

These quantitative and qualitative studies suggest that when group memberships become salient in social interaction, people become positioned in hierarchical relations. This brings about controversies in relation to multiculturalism and results in conflicting visions on how to manage intergroup relations and cultural diversity in the society. Moreover, the focus on cultural diversity and cultural maintenance in previous quantitative attitude research seems to overshadow the role of intergroup power relations and cultural essentialism brought up in the critiques of multiculturalism (Malik 2013) as well as previous qualitative studies examining the majority discourse of intergroup relations (Lyons et al. 2011; Wetherell & Potter 1992). Thus, we argue that more research that would regard attitudes towards multiculturalism as social constructions is needed. This way, we can shed more light on the meaning-making processes related to multiculturalism among majority group members.

In this study, we focus on how the participants of our study evaluate the statements of MIS, how they justify their stands, and how they negotiate the meanings of the statements developed to capture their (lack of) support for multiculturalism. To our knowledge, this is the first study examining attitudes towards multiculturalism with a multimethod design, in which quantitative and qualitative data are explored sequentially (Wolff, Knodel & Sittitrai 1993). We first explore the level of support for multiculturalism as it is operationalised in MIS and then examine the socially shared argumentative resources drawn upon when making sense of it.

Multiculturalism in Finland

The Nordic countries share features that make them interesting sites for research on multiculturalism: they have a relatively short history of immigration, their ethnic minority populations are relatively small and diverse, and equality and human rights are fundamental values in these countries (Kivisto & Wahlbeck 2013). The context of this study, Finland, can be characterised as recognising its ethnic diversity at an official level, while cultural homogeneity is an essential part of the national identity (Saukkonen 2013). At the time of data collection, in May 2013, Finland's immigrant population was one of the lowest in Europe, foreign-language-speaking population comprising 5.3% of the population (Statistics Finland 2014). However, the share of the foreign-language-speaking population was growing fast: in 2013, the growth of the foreign-language-speaking population accounted for 90% of the total population growth in Finland. The relative population increase was highest in the Helsinki region.

When Finnish multiculturalism is viewed as policies and public discourses (cf. Bloemraad & Wright 2014), contradictions emerge. The Multiculturalism Policy Index (2010) compares policies related to anti-discrimination, citizenship, and immigrant integration in Western

democracies and, thus, can be used as an indicator of multiculturalism as public policies. Even though these comparisons have methodological limitations (for discussion, refer to Bloemraad & Wright 2014), they point out general trends in official recognition of minority rights. According to this comparison, Finland has developed from a country of non-existent multiculturalism into a country of strong multiculturalism from 1980 to 2010. Paradoxically, this happened while the anti-immigrant and nationalist discourse started rising and became more mainstream (Keskinen 2009). As a result, the Finnish discourse of migration and diversity is often characterised by polarisation between the proponents and the opponents of multiculturalism (Keskinen 2009) and as Horsti and Nikunen (2013) show, the anti-immigrant actors have been able to steer the public discussion on the topic.

Participants and Procedure

This study is a part of the MIRIPS-FI project that focuses on multiculturalism and intergroup relations. The survey data for this study were collected during the summer of 2012 among a nationwide sample of Finnish majority members living in mainland Finland. The original sample for the postal survey consisted of 1,000 Finns, who were identified as Finns based on their mother tongue and country of birth and randomly selected by the Population Register. The final criterion for the survey participants was their self-reported identification as ethnic Finns. The response rate was 33.4%, resulting in a final sample of 334 participants (57% female). The mean age of the final sample of participants was 45.9 years ($SD = 13.54$), ranging between 19 and 65 years.

As a part of this wider questionnaire on intergroup relations in Finland, participants were asked to evaluate the 10-item MIS inventory¹ (with five negatively phrased items), on a five-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree; 3: neither agree nor disagree; 5: strongly agree, $\alpha = 0.89$). The items are presented in **Table 1**.

The participants were also asked if they wished to take part in an interview study concerning the same topic, and 54 participants agreed. The criteria for participating in the focus group (FG) discussions were that the participants considered themselves to belong to the Finnish majority and that they lived in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Seven out of the 15 people who lived in the Helsinki region replied to our invitation letter. In the end, three participants were recruited this way (two in FG 1, one in FG 2). The rest were contacted by snowball sampling through the first author's social network. The participants did not know each other beforehand. The demographic backgrounds of the FG participants are described in **Table 2**.

The qualitative data were collected in May 2013 by conducting two FG discussions, in which the participants were encouraged to evaluate and discuss seven statements from the MIS presented in **Table 1** (indicated by *). We chose the statements to be used as prompts in the FG discussions according to their intelligibility and variability. Items 6 and 10 were dropped because they overlapped with many other statements concerning cultural maintenance (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver 2003). Item 7 was considered by the authors as being too long and complicated to be used as a prompt. The discussions were held and analysed in Finnish and were transcribed verbatim. The extracts presented here were translated into English by the authors. The clarifying additions made by researchers are marked with double brackets.

Quantitative Attitude Approach

A common way to define the concept of attitude is to regard it as 'a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour' (Eagly & Chaiken 1993: 1), and it is typically studied with self-reported survey measures (Maio & Haddock 2014). However, apart from examining survey responses as reflecting participants'

Table 1: Items of the MIS with their response frequencies, means, and standard deviations.

		N	M	SD	Strongly disagree (1) (%)	Strongly agree (5) %
1.	Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of different ethnic groups*	334	3.96	1.09	4.2	35.8
2.	Ethnic minorities should be helped in preserving their cultural heritage in Finland*	332	3.32	1.23	9.6	17.1
3.	It is best for Finland if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible*	334	2.18	1.10	33.4	3.3
4.	A society that has different ethnic and cultural groups can tackle new problems as they occur*	333	3.03	1.14	12.3	8.4
5.	The unity of Finland is weakened by people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds sticking to their old ways*	334	3.04	1.21	10.7	12.8
6.	If people of different ethnic and cultural origins want to keep their own culture, they should keep it to themselves	334	2.62	1.22	19.8	9.0
7.	A society that has a variety of ethnic or cultural groups has more problems with national unity than societies with one or two basic cultural groups	333	3.31	1.17	8.7	16.2
8.	Finns should do more to learn about the customs and heritage of different ethnic and cultural groups in this country*	334	3.31	1.17	10.4	13.4
9.	Immigrant parents must encourage their children to retain the culture and traditions of their homeland*	334	3.38	1.12	7.2	14.6
10.	People who come to Finland should change their behaviour to be more like the Finns	334	3.4	1.16	6.9	16.2

* Items used in the focus group discussions.

Table 2: Focus group participants.

	Age	Active in labour market	Gender	Years of education in total
FG 1 Eeva	47	Yes	F	16
FG 1 Arto	47	Yes	M	14
FG 1 Marja	63	No (retired)	F	17
FG 2 Mikko	60	Yes	M	17
FG 2 Helena	49	Yes	F	17
FG 2 Katja	43	Yes	F	19
FG 2 Anni	38	Yes	F	15.5

psychological orientations towards a target, they can also be studied as social interaction (Niska, Vesala & Vesala 2012; Vesala & Rantanen 2007). Following this notion, we analysed the responses to the MIS items as claims on how the relations between ethnocultural groups should be managed in Finland.

As regards the quantitative part of this study, the mean score of support for multiculturalism in our sample was $M = 3.24$ ($SD = 1.35$), indicating, on average, neutral evaluations of the MIS items. Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver (2003) obtained similar results in the Dutch context (Breugelmans & van de Vijver 2004; Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver 2008). As can be seen from the descriptive statistics of the responses to each item presented in **Table 1**, two statements stand out from the rest in terms of how they were rated: a positively worded statement 1 (Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of different ethnic groups), which 35.8% of respondents strongly agreed with, and a negatively worded statement 3 (It is best for Finland if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible), which elicited strong disagreement in about every third respondent. From the traditional attitude research perspective, this observation could be seen to indicate relatively positive attitudes towards multiculturalism. However, our qualitative analysis suggests that the picture is more complex.

The rest of the items were typically evaluated by using the midpoints of the scale. The traditional approach on attitude measuring this tendency is often interpreted to indicate uncertainty or a neutral stance towards the attitude object (Likert, cited in Clason & Dormody 1994). However, by focusing on the means or response percentiles, we cannot examine the ambivalence related to the statements, nor can we say anything about the arguments used to justify different evaluations. Hence, we now turn to the qualitative analysis of the FG discussions, in which Finnish majority members discuss seven statements of the MIS.

Qualitative Attitude Approach

A qualitative attitude approach (QAA) provides a researcher with a theoretical approach which is rooted in social constructionism (Burr 2015) and shares many features with rhetorical (Billig 1996) and discursive psychology (Edwards & Potter 1992). In QAA, attitudes are examined as communicative, instead of cognitive phenomena. To elaborate, attitude expressions are not seen as caused by underlying cognitive tendencies or explained by demographic factors. Instead, people are seen as taking positions in the social world by expressing and justifying certain attitudes (Vesala & Rantanen 2007; for discussion in English, refer to Pyysiäinen 2010). As one of the starting points of this analytical approach is that thinking and interaction are argumentative in nature (Billig 1996), the aim of QAA is to produce data in which people evaluate and discuss controversial topics with the help of prompts that are relevant for the topic. Thus, the participants of this study (see **Table 2**) were encouraged to actively discuss seven items in the MIS inventory.

In QAA, the qualitative analysis is conducted in two phases. In the first phase, expressions of agreement or disagreement with the statements and their justifications during the discussions are identified and coded into positive, negative or reserved categories of evaluation. In the second phase, that is interpretative phase of analysis, dimensions of evaluation are identified based on these categories. Identifying attitudes from the FG data denotes that instead of looking at the data in terms of the statements, the focus is on the attitude objects, that is, what is being evaluated, how it is being evaluated, and by whom it is being evaluated (Vesala & Rantanen 2007).

The analytic procedure of the qualitative part of the present study followed the QAA procedure. As a result of the interpretative analysis, two attitude objects were identified: cultural diversity and cultural maintenance, which were evaluated positively and negatively.

Cultural diversity and cultural maintenance are essential aspects of the wider theoretical framework in which MIS was developed (Berry 2011). Therefore, instead of merely stating the discovery of these objects, the contribution of this study is examining the social processes of evaluation and the consequences of these processes. In the following section, we demonstrate the ways in which the participants evaluated the two attitude objects. To characterise the data, we chose three typical and rich examples of our participants' argumentation.

In the last part of the results section, we take a more discursively oriented look at the ways in which the two attitude objects were constructed by viewing the participants' argumentation as revealing of the argumentative resources used when arguing for and against multiculturalism. With this discussion, we wish to highlight the socially shared nature of making sense of multiculturalism that extends beyond the immediate context of the FG situation (Wetherell 2003).

Evaluations of Cultural Diversity

In the argumentation concerning cultural diversity, the presence of culturally different groups in Finland was evaluated negatively as problems or positively as resources. Even though the focus of this analysis is on interaction and our aim is not to examine individual participants' talk, it should be mentioned that in the course of the discussions, most of the participants evaluated cultural diversity both as problems and as a resource.

When cultural diversity was evaluated negatively, the participants often used disclaimers (Hewitt & Stokes 1975) to manage their accountability when expressing negative views on multiculturalism. This was evident in many comments in which tolerance and acceptance of immigrants were first evaluated positively, followed by a 'but'. After this, the dominant position of the Finns was brought up, and recognition for immigrants' culture and traditions was seen as depending on the terms defined by the majority.

Extract 1 exemplifies the use of disclaimers, in connection to negative attitude expressions towards cultural diversity. This account was a part of the discussion following statement 1 (Finns should accept that Finnish society consists of different ethnic groups), which mostly elicited expressions of agreement in both the discussions and in the survey in which 35.8% of the participants reported strong agreement. In FG 1, participant Arto² started the discussion with a lengthy comment in which he talked about the Finns, including himself, as 'cultural racists' who 'cannot stand Islamic culture'. He then continued by redefining the statement: 'In my opinion we need to accept different cultures but we do not have to live on their terms'. The other participants challenged Arto's views by stating that it is important for the majority to accept immigrants as part of the Finnish society and be open to other cultures, after which the discussion went on addressing the adaptation of different immigrant groups. 'Muslim men' were brought up as a group that has the most problems in adapting to the society. Extract 1 is Arto's response to the moderator's question: 'Would it be possible to think that accepting [immigrants] is something the Finns could still work on?'

Extract 1 (FG 1)

Arto: 'That exactly is the difficult part because on the one hand, I know that we need [immigrants and/or migration], and it would be great, but on the other hand, should I accept moral stands that are different from mine? As a native person, why should I adapt my principles to the ones of an immigrant? I think maybe it should be the opposite, that they should adapt their views and behaviour, because they are the ones to come here, to the strange culture, in the end.'

In his account, Arto is balancing between positive and negative stands for the statement. In order to present assimilation and dominant position of the majority as desirable, Arto first makes a disclaimer (I know that we need...) to appear as a rational, non-racist person. The dominant position of the majority justified on the grounds of being 'native' and the Finnish majority is presented as authorised to set the norms to which the newcomers have to adapt to (for similar observations of the majority's discourse, refer to Antonsich 2012; Gibson & Hamilton 2011; Lyons et al. 2011). This comment was not challenged by the other participants.

Berry (2011) stresses that as a result of intergroup contact, both the majority and the minority groups change. However, arguments addressing reciprocity in adaptation were rarely found in our data. On the contrary, the task of becoming part of the Finnish society was constructed as a one-way process. Immigrants were stereotyped as representatives of foreignness and consequently the ones who should accept Finnishness or change their way of life. The question regarding immigrants' responsibility to conform to the dominant culture is central in the negotiations of becoming a full member of the Finnish society, as we have shown elsewhere (Varjonen et al. 2018).

As noted, cultural diversity was also evaluated positively. Different cultural backgrounds were defined as providing 'interesting things' and 'additional information' to Finnish society and culture. In addition, diversity was regarded as useful in 'helping us in finding solutions' with the condition that 'we are also willing to listen to other opinions'. Culturally diverse society was seen as the opposite of stability, as Extract 2 exemplifies. The account took place in connection to statement 3 (It is best for Finland if all people forget their different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as soon as possible), which was mostly evaluated with reserve in FGs and in the survey data (63.3% reported neutral or moderate stand towards the statement). The participants of FG 2 responded to the statement by stating, for example, that 'we do enjoy a little bit of difference, do we' and argued for the right for cultural maintenance and for cultural diversity in connection to this statement. Anni's comment was the first response to the moderator asking the participants to once more take stand on the statement after the discussion had moved on to other topics.

Extract 2 (FG 2)

Anni: 'If we only want quiet co-existence without any conflicts, then it is best if we are all alike and there won't be any extreme phenomena that we do not want to handle. But it can also lead to us not developing and just being here amongst ourselves, I don't know if that would be a desirable outcome.'

When cultural diversity was evaluated as a resource, the problems resulting from it were also discussed. For instance, in Extract 2, a culturally homogeneous society is attached to being stable and 'without any conflicts' but also in a static state, 'not developing'. Verkuyten (2004) made similar findings concerning the argumentation of the Dutch majority members: positive arguments of multiculturalism were often constructed to oppose negative counterarguments. Anni's comment recaps positive evaluations of cultural diversity in which majority's possibility to gain from cultural diversity was often being weighed. Immigrants, on the other hand, were not seen as active agents in the development of the society.

In sum, evaluations of cultural diversity were based on the idea that due to immigration, there are groups in Finland that hold different values, views, and practices than the Finns. This difference was evaluated not only as mostly producing problems but also as a resource to the society. The majority's culture and way of life were constructed as dominant, whereas 'the culture of immigrants' was seen as an opposite to it. Next, we focus on examining the ways in which participants evaluated cultural maintenance, which was identified as the second attitude object.

Evaluations of Cultural Maintenance

All of the negative accounts on cultural maintenance were related to negative evaluation of cultural diversity (e.g. Extract 1). As this line of argumentation was discussed earlier, we concentrate here on the positive accounts of cultural maintenance in which diversity was not commented on.

When commenting on statements 2, 3, and 7, the participants stated that 'culture is important', that 'culture strengthens (immigrants') self-esteem' and that 'knowing about one's cultural background is a richness'. In one comment, 'letting go of the cultural background' was seen as impossible because culture was seen as intertwined with one's past life as a whole. In those comments, cultural background was discussed as 'roots' as an important part of identity or conception of the self.

This 'culture as roots' talk appears to be in line with the academic definition of multiculturalism as recognition and respect for minority cultures (Taylor 1992). Similar pattern of talk was identified by Wetherell & Potter (1988) who called it as an interpretative repertoire of culture fostering. By critically examining this talk, Wetherell and Potter showed that the repertoire of culture fostering actually enables advocating multiculturalism without committing to reciprocal change: by focusing on the loss of culture or cultural identity, the minority group is presented as deprived and weak, and the role of the majority is to offer assistance 'as a mother might clear a space for a child to play, knowing that play is good for the mental health of the child' (Wetherell & Potter 1988: 179).

The positive evaluations of cultural maintenance in our data indeed resemble the repertoire of culture fostering. In many comments, the division between majority and minority groups was apparent, for example, when the participants argued for allowing 'them' to maintain their traditions. The majority was constructed, again, as the group that has the power to allow minorities a certain degree of cultural maintenance without having to change itself.

However, in our data, the evaluation of culture as roots also enabled our participants to draw from *similarities* between themselves as majority members and members of ethnic minorities. While arguing for the maintenance of 'the immigrants' cultures', the participants often used their own cultural backgrounds as a resource of argumentation. Extract 3 is an example of this line of argumentation. It is from a discussion following the last statement 9 (Immigrant parents must encourage their children to retain the culture and traditions of their homeland).

Eeva's comment is a part of discussion in which being confident about one's own cultural roots was argued as increasing tolerance among the majority and well-being among immigrants. Extract 3 is a response to Arto's comment in which he stated that 'someone who is not doing as well as they would hope, experiences all foreign to be a great threat'.

Extract 3 (FG 1)

Eeva: 'Maintaining your own language and culture in a way creates the roots for you. Who wants to be without roots coming from nowhere? I was born in Northern Finland and I really don't understand that some people want so bad to become like the people in Helsinki, that they can't even talk about where they were born as if it was shameful. I think you have to respect your roots.'

The importance of culture for identity was treated as a rhetorically self-sufficient argument that needed no justification. In its emphasis on commonalities with immigrants and Finns, this line of argumentation also comes closer to the humanisation talk identified in the political rhetoric on refugees (Kirkwood 2017). Humanisation refers to argumentation in which asylum seekers were positioned as belonging to a common category with the speaker in order

to justify helping them. Even though the participants in our discussions did not explicitly refer to a category of humans, this talk served a similar moral function as humanisation: it enabled the speaker to promote immigrants' rights and present him-/herself as an open-minded person.

Resources of Argumentation: Cultural Essentialism and Nationalism

Finally, we interpret the findings from the aforementioned analysis as revealing socially shared conceptions concerning intergroup relations and diversity. Billig (1997: 48) points out that when discussing, we draw from assumptions and terms that are available to us 'culturally, historically, and ideologically'. The argumentation analysed in this study drew from two argumentative resources: essentialism and nationalism, which enabled the participants to present ethnic and cultural groups as well as intergroup relations in a specific manner.

The majority of our participants' talk was based on essentialist argumentation (Verkuyten 2003) concerning differentiation between cultural groups. As cultural background was defined as an important part of one's identity, different cultural backgrounds were seen as making people inherently different. Culture was discussed as a static whole that people carry with them their whole life. Essentialist argumentation ran through the whole data, as it was used when cultural diversity was evaluated as problems (Extract 1), as resources (Extract 2), as well as when culture was evaluated as roots (Extract 3). This is in line with Verkuyten's (2003) observation: essentialism can be used for opposing purposes, such as for supporting or opposing assimilation. Even though cultural essentialism was one of the defining features of argumentation, there were also comments in which it was challenged. However, these comments were marginal, brief remarks.

Especially in the case of negative evaluations of cultural diversity, argumentation was built on the idea that the majority group has the right to set the norms for a right or wrong way of life. When focusing on the demands of assimilation and the bolstering of the majority's dominant position (e.g. Extract 1), the participants drew from nationalist ideology, which enables reproducing the 'one nation, one state' argument as a natural and inevitable part of everyday life (Billig 1995). In the context of nationalism, cultural diversity is seen as a threat to the dominant position of the majority: thus, the only way to maintain this position is to demand minorities to adapt to majority's practices, traditions, and values (Skey 2010). However, as we have shown elsewhere, this discourse can also be challenged by immigrants as well as members of the majority by referring to individualism or multiculturalism as producing stigmatising practices (Nortio et al. 2016).

Considering the Finnish media discourse of immigration, it is not surprising that cultural essentialism and nationalism were identified as resources of argumentation. Horsti (2005) notes that in the media, immigrants are often used as an ethnic mirror that is used to describe Finns and Finland. Even though this way of framing of migrants entails the recognition of diversity and interest in the experiences of immigrants, Finnishness is still the norm to which immigrants are compared.

Conclusions

In this multimethod study conducted among majority Finns, we asked people to evaluate multiculturalism as it is presented in one of the most widely used measures, the MIS scale. We examined the ways in which multicultural ideology is evaluated and how the evaluations are socially constructed. Our multimethod examination highlights multiculturalism as an ambiguous attitude object intertwined with nationalism and cultural essentialism.

The survey participants hardly expressed strong stand towards the statements, but rather evaluated them with reserve. Using the midpoints of the scale can be interpreted as indicating

a neutral attitude towards multiculturalism, but it can also point towards difficulties in evaluating the statements. To examine the evaluation process more closely, we conducted the qualitative part of the study. Before discussing our key results, let us consider the limitations of this study.

This study could be criticised for having a small number of participants in the FGs. The participants who all resided in the capital area, regardless of representing a rather wide age cohort (38–63), shared a somewhat similar socio-economic background in terms of education and employment situation. This is due to difficulties in recruiting participants which, for one, indicates the sensitive nature of the topic in Finland (Horsti & Nikunen 2013). However, it was not our aim to offer results that could be generalised to a wider population, nor to examine the participants' attitudes as cognitive, intra-individual phenomena that could be explained with different demographic variables. Rather, our focus was on the socially shared ways to make sense of multiculturalism. From this perspective, the FG discussions offered rich data that enabled us to examine the possibilities of argumentation for and against multiculturalism, as it is operationalised in the MIS.

Also, the six years between collecting the data and writing this article deserve critical reflection. The so-called refugee crisis and its aftermath have kept immigration and multiculturalism in public debates in Finland, resulting in polarised positions among the political elite (Lönnqvist, Ilmarinen & Sortheix 2019). We consider our findings to be relevant in trying to unravel these more current discussions. We also argue that given the topicality of the issue of multiculturalism and the new analytical approach taken to it, the value of our findings for the academic discussion of multiculturalism is not diminished by the delay in reporting them.

The results of our qualitative analysis showed that multiculturalism can be rhetorically constructed in various ways: as cultural diversity evaluated through problems and resources, and as cultural maintenance that was also evaluated as problems or as providing people with roots, a source of identity. The multifaceted nature of support for multiculturalism has been discussed by Breugelmans & van de Vijver (2004: 418), who conclude that 'majority support for multiculturalism is a simple construct with a complex manifestation'. Our results suggest that not only the manifestation but also the construct of multiculturalism should be seen as complex. We argue that as qualitative techniques allow for inconsistency and ambiguity in attitude expressions (Mason 2006; Wetherell & Potter 1988), they are appropriate for unravelling the complexity of the evaluation processes, that is, manifestation, as well as the objects of evaluation, that is, the construct. The complexity of the manifestation ran through the data and was identified by looking at the ways in which people took stand on the statements. With the chosen approach, it would have been impossible to determine coherent intra-individual tendencies of evaluation for each FG participant (see also Wetherell & Potter 1988), as multiculturalism was constructed jointly in the course of discussions.

As regards the complexity of the construct of multiculturalism, quantitative attitude research has demonstrated that support for assimilation and hierarchical intergroup relations are its opposite (e.g. van de Vijver, Breugelmans & Schalk-Soekar 2008). However, our qualitative analysis suggests that the relation between assimilation and multiculturalism is more ambiguous. More specifically, we show that even when people evaluate MIS statements positively and express support for multiculturalism, they can use and reproduce discourse that draws on hierarchical intergroup relations. This finding challenges the assumption of unidimensional assessment of multiculturalism and bears resemblance to the critique of multiculturalism as being based on cultural essentialism and ultimately, replacing race with culture in justifying hierarchies and exclusion (Lentin & Titley 2011; Malik 2013). The uneasy relationship between nationalism and multiculturalism previously brought up by Howarth (2016) and now identified in our participants' argumentation calls for critical reflection on

academic, especially acculturation psychological and social psychological research on multiculturalism and its relation to lay discourse.

Despite our critical stand towards the MIS, we do not regard multiculturalism as a failed project nor do we suggest that the definition of multiculturalism should be revised. Instead, based on our results, we argue that power struggles and cultural essentialism already are an inherent part of the everyday multiculturalism and if researchers are interested in studying it, these elements should be better incorporated in the research agendas and designs. We also argue that dialogue between different social scientific traditions examining multiculturalism and related concepts, such as nationalism, could pave the way for more thorough and critical research that can better contribute to the society.

According to Kymlicka (2010: 101), 'multiculturalism is first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion'. This statement captures well the centrality of intergroup equality present in the most widely used definitions of multiculturalism in the social scientific academic discourse. However, our findings regarding the resources of argumentation show that the way lay people discuss and evaluate multiculturalism draws on intergroup hierarchies that multiculturalism aims to oppose. In our data, participants' discourse draws from asymmetrical power relations and nationalist argumentation, which can be seen as a way to maintain the status quo. Studies on Finnish media discourse (Horsti 2005) and qualitative studies on majority discourse of intergroup relations (Antonsich 2012; Lyons et al. 2011) have made similar observations regarding the ways in which the dominant group justifies its position in the society. We demonstrate that this happens also in evaluating multiculturalism.

To conclude, our findings show that even in Finland, a context where equality is an essential part of national identity (Tuori 2007), the way multiculturalism is discussed can reproduce hierarchies. Thus, we argue that to understand everyday multiculturalism, research needs to acknowledge the ambiguous and complex ways it is represented and debated between different groups having their own interests. In the light of our findings, we argue that scientific or political developments on multiculturalism cannot take place in isolation from the meanings given to it in everyday life.

Notes

- ¹ It should be noted that the words 'multiculturalism' and 'multicultural ideology' were not explicitly mentioned in connection to the scale in the survey. However, multiculturalism was mentioned in introducing the aims of the discussion for the focus group participants.
- ² The participants were given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

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Competing Interests

EN is a member of the board for ETMU (The Society for the Study of Ethnic Relations and International Migration) which is one of the institutions supporting NJMR. The board of ETMU works on voluntary basis and has no influence on the editorial processes of the journal. The other authors have no competing interests.

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